

## Bouquet

John Algeo's review of *Webster's Dictionary of English Usage* ('The best of the genre' *ET*26, Apr 91) was a joy and a gem.

Whitney Bolton,  
Princeton, New Jersey, USA

## A bid for Bitnet

Fraida Dubin's story of the electronic mail systems is quite revealing since it shows how difficult so many language teachers and their associates find it to hook into the system that fellow scientists have long ago discovered. Once started, however, Bitnet can become an obsession as the user discovers the ease at which correspondence at all levels can be handled by electronic mail. And, of course language learners at this day and age ought to have some knowledge of how to handle E-mail systems.

Last year I began a project in which my students can write to university students in other places both in, and out, of Japan. This has enabled them to use their English in a practical way and has provided a new source of motivation. We have also begun to write an international newspaper in which students can write short articles of interest and send them across the globe to other destinations. Students then publish the articles they receive in their paper.

Anybody is welcome to join, so if someone has shown an interest in Bitnet either as a result of Fraida Dubin's article or for other reasons, do send me a message.

Reuben Gerling,  
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## Presenting and delivering: 1

By chance I first read Joel Kaye's letter ('Presenting and delivering', *ET*25) on the same day (24 May 1991) that I watched a BBC documentary on alternative methods of childbirth in the excellent series *Your Life in Their Hands*. All three of the usages quoted by Mr Kaye ('present' as an intransitive verb, 'baby' as a proper noun, 'deliver' as a transitive verb, the object being the mother) occurred in the programme, some several times. They seemed to be perfectly standard terminology among midwives and obstetric staff.

The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (eighth edition, 1990), incidentally, gives both 'present' and 'deliver' with the usages mentioned, defined respectively as follows: *present* 11 (*absol.*) *Med.* (of a part of a foetus) be directed toward the cervix at the time of delivery; *deliver* 3 d assist in giving birth (*delivered the patient successfully*). As for 'baby', I would have thought this was a name, more than a noun, that is, a substitute name for the real one that will either soon be given or that is not known by the speaker. It is thus really 'Baby', as in the classic comedy movie *Bringing Up Baby* (1938) and elsewhere.

Adrian Room,  
Stamford, Lincolnshire,  
England

## Presenting and delivering: 2

I would like to draw the attention of your correspondent Joel Kaye to the existence of the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2nd edition, 1989, 20 vols.). This useful little reference work lists under *present* verb 9b the intransitive medical

use to which he refers, giving the first (obstetrical) example from 1722, and illustrating widespread modern use. It also includes *deliver* in the obstetrical sense. The construction with mother as grammatical object was the standard from at least the 14th century to the mid-19th, and is perpetuated notably by the King James Bible (as at Luke 1:57 and 2:6). The construction with offspring as object is rarely recorded – only in passive form around 1600 (an interesting example of revived use?). Perhaps with the spread of anaesthetic the notion of delivery from the pains of childbearing has been eclipsed by the image of a baby as compared to a parcel, delivered to the doorstep by a ciconiform postman.

'Baby' without article is surely derived from nursery usage, as a quasi-proper noun intended to be cosily comforting, as 'Nurse', 'Doctor', 'Sister'. It is a useful way of referring in human terms to an unnamed person, and seems parallel to 'Mother', 'Father', and 'Baby' as used in the older kind of children's story for a brother or sister too small to be of real interest.

On another topic: though I agree with D.I. Masson about the unfortunateness of many scientific coinages, I cannot regard as "highly irregular" the examples which he cites. What on earth is wrong with 'piezo-electric' and 'palynologist'? They may be derived from present rather than past tense stems of verbs, but the *-o-* is the English connective, not some ignorant coiner's incorporation of the Greek first person inflection. There is sound precedent for derivation from present stems: the notable biologist Aristotle, who undoubtedly knew his Greek, coined the term 'schizopous', not 'schistopous', for cloven-footed animals. Incidentally, palynology is the study of

pollen – a useful mnemonic for the Anglophone.

Jeremy H. Marshall,  
Oxford, England

## Some citations

### Themself

I refer to your *Comment* in the

April 90 issue, which I have just received, incidentally, due to some hitch in the renewal of the subscription, and enclose two “*themselves*”. The example from the *Financial Times* advertisement appears perfectly logical, referring as it does to a person in the singular (*the successful applicant*), whereas the one from *Business Law* is a bit more curious,

having *people* as its antecedent.

### Siblings

When did *siblings* (traditional lexical definition: one’s brothers and/or sisters) become one’s *children*? I have seen this usage quote frequently, most recently in a letter (enclosed) in the July issue of *English Today*, where it appears to mean *children*. I also

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from the *Financial Times*, 8 Oct 87



### 9.7 Inertia Selling

The success of inertia selling as a promotion method rests on people’s basic idleness and lack of legal knowledge. It involves sending entirely unsolicited and, usually, expensive products to unsuspecting people and informing them that although under no obligation to buy, if they do not wish to avail themselves of the magnificent offer, they should return the goods within (say) thirty days. Often this was not done, out of forgetfulness, and after thirty-one days a bill would be delivered to the now exasperated customer which he or she felt obliged to pay. Had such persons known of the case of *Felthouse v Bindley* (see Section 4.6) they would have been aware that they had not accepted the offer made to them and were therefore under no obligation to pay up.

from Janice Elliott  
Montague,  
*Business Law*,  
Chambers  
Commerce  
Series,  
Edinburgh.  
1987

## Thingamajigs and mudguards

The Umbrella Man of a popular song some years ago did his repairs for you 'with what he called his thingamajig', and I have no difficulty with 'Thing you may jig(gle)', being sure (until I looked in *Chambers*) that jig was a verb similar to jog. Certainly my siblings have so used it. I note that on p.72 the word suddenly becomes *thingamijig*, (corrected later). Conversely, I do not think I have heard *thingamabob*, always and only *thingamibob*.

Now why does Baumgardner regard *mudguard* (p.61) as a Pakistani word? My father's car had mudguards, as did all cars until the guards became fused with the body as its wings. There are plenty of bicycles in this village,

read...  
that the...  
may be lega...  
specific time...  
context of news...  
is a headline...  
World Service New...  
ruary: 'A European...  
rocket has exploded...  
after lift-off.'

Chris...  
The British Council, Alg...  
Alge.

## Humorous definitions

In his review of the latest (1988) edition of *Chambers English Dictionary* (ET21), Ewald Standop rightly emphasises that the Dictionary has lost none of its originality.

He does not mention one orig-

On...  
hav...  
called...  
what i...  
Wei...  
attenti...  
ing int...  
adjectiv

quote an example found years ago in a paperback whodunit, where the meaning is clear:

... I went first to see Tate. He opened the door himself, his youngest sibling clutching with sticky hands at the legs of his corduroy trousers (Angus Ross, *The Leeds Fiasco*, p. 109).

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## Real and unreal natives

I was pleased to read P.D. Tripathi's response ("Angles of Vision: On real and unreal Teachers," *ET25*, 36-39) to my reprinted article "Real and Unreal Teachers" (*ET23*, 27-31). I wrote the original article (*Cross Currents*

16(2), 55-61) with the intention of eliciting responses and enlarging the discussion of English language teaching professionalism, and it has certainly done so. I continue to be grateful to Tom McArthur, *English Today*, and Cambridge University Press for reprinting the article and expanding the professionalism discussion.

The bulk of Tripathi's opinions are valid and reasonable, though they frequently disagree with my own. One point, however, needs to be clarified. Tripathi quotes my article as follows: "In Japan, [a 'real' teacher] is either Japanese, a Western native English speaker, or a completely fluent native English speaker from a non-Western country" (p. 38). Though this is the sentence that was published in the *ET23* reprint, it is not the sentence that was originally published in *Cross Currents* 16(2). In *Cross Currents*, the sentence defined a 'real' teacher in Japan as "either Japanese, a Western native English speaker, or a com-

pletely fluent English language speaker from a non-Western country" (p.56). The inclusion of the word "native" in the third member of the list printed in *ET* changes the meaning, and my intention, considerably. It is unfortunate that this alteration occurred, and I apologize to any who may have been disturbed by it.

Allow me to clearly state that my definition of 'real' English teachers includes trained native and nonnative speakers; the definition hinges on training, not on native speaking ability. Contrary to Tripathi's conclusion, I would certainly not exclude Braj Kachru, Otto Jespersen, or P.D. Tripathi himself from the profession.

I wonder if it was this perception of exclusion that led to the personal attacks found throughout Tripathi's article and to the fictions he spins concerning my motives as an English teacher. Such *ad hominen* attacks do nothing to advance the English language teaching profession, and I

regret that Tripathi found them necessary.

*ET* readers interested in following the professionalism discussion elsewhere should see *Cross Currents* 17(1) (Forum: Professionalism in English Language Teaching) and *Cross Currents* 17(2) (letters to the editor) for other responses to my article: please write *Cross Currents*, 4-14-1 Shiroyama, Odawara, Kanagawa 250, Japan, for back issues information. In addition, I summarized and responded to these letters in a series of two forthcoming articles for the *EA Journal* ("Issues in English Language Teaching: Self-Interest and Teacher Education," 9(1), fall, 1991; and "Issues in English Language Teaching: Qualities of Concern and Licensing Requirements," 9(2), spring, 1991). [Note seasonal ordering as in original letter: *Ed*]. Please write *EA Journal*, 3 Union Street, Pyrmont NSW 2009, Australia, for subscription information.

Thomas Clayton,  
Editor, *Cross Currents*,  
Newton, Iowa, U.S.A.

● *Editor*: When I received Thomas Clayton's letter, I was chagrined at the likelihood that I might somehow have corrupted a reprinted article – one of the least desirable of the many slips an editor can make. I was also puzzled as to how it could have happened, because the change seems so sophisticated that only someone knowledgeable in the topic could have perpetrated it: it looks like a deliberate insertion (something that would have been quite indefensible). Yet I saw no reason why I or anybody else should want to add 'native' to the text at that or any other point.

Investigation has clarified the matter, however, and shows that the slip-up was not sophisticated at all; indeed, it is a classic of its own mindless kind. The keyboarder who turned the original text of *Cross Currents* into an *ET* text saw similar phrases on

## Tempting typographical fate

The following example of the inexorability of error comes from the Acknowledgments section of John L. Casti's *Paradigms Lost: Images of Man in the Mirror of Science* (New York: William Morrow, 1989). There are no prizes for identifying the typo.

There are two characteristics that every inhabitant of that vast universe of books seems to share. The first is the appearance of embarrassing typos, literary gaffes, and conceptual errors that no author's or editor's brand of "weedkiller" ever seems able to eradicate completely. The second is the presence in the book of the hearts, hands, minds, and souls of others. Like all authors, I hope that this book will be the exception that proves the rule for the first universal property, but I'm not placing any bets on it. As to the second general feature, it pleases me greatly to announce that this book is no exception. I have been luckier than most in having had the benefit of the support, encouragement, opinions, advice, and even services of a large number of people without whom this project would still be languishing in that shadowy world of ideas that almost were but aren't. So it's both a pleasure and a privilege for me to bring these unsung heroes to the reading public's attention here.

adjacent lines: above, 'a Western native English speaker', and below, 'a completely fluent English speaker'. The eye easily jumps lines when moving back and forth between source and target texts; as a result, in this case, the typesetter spliced the two phrases quite inadvertently, producing 'a completely fluent native English speaker'. This change does not make complete sense in the context, but it made sufficient sense for it to pass undetected through our proof-reading filter. The proof-reading of *ET* falls to four people: one at the company that sets the text, two part-time proof-readers working for me, and myself when I collate the results of the work of the other three and scan the text as a final check.

In the good old days, proof-readers worked in pairs, one reading the original text aloud slowly, including punctuation and the like, while the other checked the new text against what was being read out, word by word and line by line. This highly effective but exhausting procedure is seldom followed nowadays: it is expensive and

time-consuming, and few publishers can afford it (assuming they could find enough people both willing to do such work and suitably skilled in its nuances).

With our system of separate proof-readers checking against original copy whenever they think it necessary, *ET* achieves about 99.9% accuracy in the final product. Interestingly enough, however, all three proof-readers, though largely in agreement, tend to catch or miss different things. The Editor catches a few more, but two or three errors (usually minor) get through the net every time.

In this instance a slip that significantly affected the message and intent of the original text escaped our checks. I therefore apologize without reservation to Thomas Clayton, a fellow editor, to our contributor P.D. Tripathi, and to our readers. I also promise that we'll try to increase our vigilance (but see the accompanying panel as a salutary warning to anyone making or reading such promises).

It would have been good, of course, if the mistake had never occurred, but at least one can get

something useful out of it; in an unwelcome but interesting way it brings together two of *ET*'s ongoing discussions: on real and unreal teachers as initiated by Thomas Clayton, and on the perils of editing, as initiated by Ruth Wajnryb and David Cervi in *ET*26, Apr 91 (see next letter). I would be glad to hear from readers about their experience of typos and other slips in the processing of text as well as their more general thoughts about imperfection in human communication.

## An editor comments

As General Editor of *Language International* I was of course interested by your editorial in *ET*26, and by the Cervi-Wajnryb article in the same issue, on the problems of editing.

It is a question of horses for courses, whether one edits hard for consistency of treatment, or one edits lightly to allow contributors freedom of expression. I myself edit lightly. Anything potentially libellous must of course be cut out, since the UK libel laws are very unforgiving, though in our case potential libels only occur in Letters to the Editor. The normal subject of the libellous ones is certain translation agencies notorious for not paying freelancers, but on one occasion we received from a reviewed author a vituperative and highly personal attack on a mildly critical reviewer who was known to the author.

It is of course necessary to make contributions comply with the house style, which in our case includes British English spelling,

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Readers' letters are welcomed. *ET* policy is to publish as representative and informative a selection as possible in each issue. Such correspondence, however, may be subject to editorial adaptation in order to make the most effective use of both the letters and the space available.

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## School Cheer (Progressive style)

A-root-toot-toot  
A-root-toot-toot  
We're from the Goose Egg  
Institute!  
We are not rough  
We are not tough  
We don't believe in  
competitive stuff.  
We learn ballet  
And art through play  
And how to be well-liked,  
each day.  
We're taught to weave  
And fly a kite  
And make a good milk  
custard.  
We cannot read  
Or add or write  
But, boy, are we adjusted!

Alma Denny,  
New York

verb endings in *-ise* rather than *-ize*, numerals one to ten written out, no stops in abbreviations and acronyms, etc.

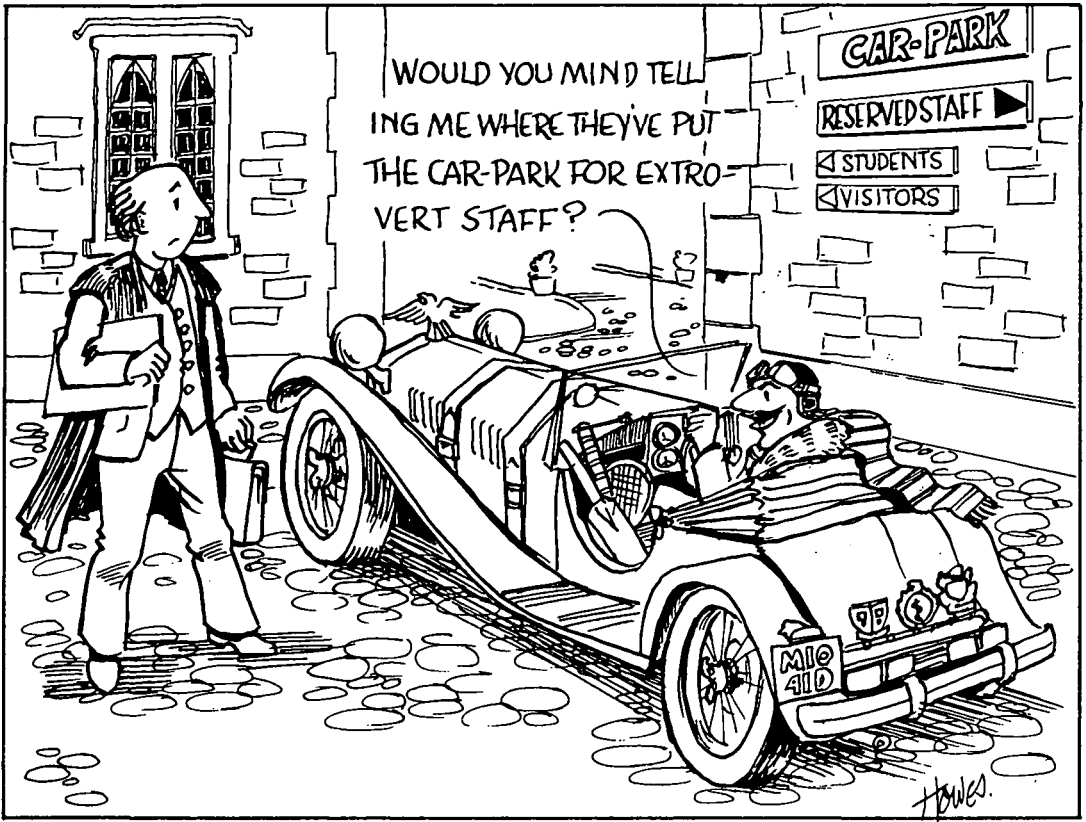
I do have the advantage of not being concerned with the layout and proof-reading stages. Occasionally articles have to be cut (by the publishers' own editor) to fit layout, and on such occasions, having no responsibility, I can hypocritically share the author's indignation at the excising of his gems. Sometimes my own material is cut. And then, of course, it seems to me they have cut the little touches I was most pleased with. The little pleasantries which I like to think have enlivened the text are no doubt seen as superfluous inaneities to the publisher's representative.

I like the Cervi-Wajnryb phrases "tiptoeing around sensibilities" and "doing as you would be done by", which really do sum up two of the most important aspects of the editor's role.

Another major aspect, touched on only peripherally by your correspondents, is how to get reviewers to actually get down to doing reviews. No job is more easy to put off. First the reviewer feels he has to actually read the book. I try quoting Oscar Wilde's dictum – "I never read a book before reviewing it, it prejudices one so" – at them but they do not take the dictum seriously (at this stage, at least). Then, when they have had the book so long they cannot reasonably pretend they have not read it yet (they haven't, of course), the excuses are trotted out: "checking some of the references" is the usual one. The editor tries to pile on the pressure (in the nicest possible way, of course) – "eagerly awaited" is the phrase I use. But in the last resort only one thing will work: a terse request to return the book so another reviewer can be found. The reviewer then, assuming he can lay his hands on the book in question (total evasion at this stage means he has lost it), will realise he does not actually have time to read the work: so what he does is quickly paraphrase the publisher's blurb, and refer to something on page 236 to give the impression he has read it. He then tells his colleagues, "Of course I felt the book really called for an extended review, but the editor only allowed me the space to give the sketchiest outline of what it was about."

I am of course being cynical; but I assure readers that to get reviewers (with some much-valued exceptions) to actually produce reviews is one of the more difficult tasks an editor faces.

Geoffrey Kingscott,  
General Editor,  
Language International,  
c/o Praetorius Limited,  
Nottingham, England



**CROSSWORD**

**ET 27 Crossword solution**

1	O	S	C	U	L	A	T	E	5	F	O	R	M	A	L
S	O	A	H						U	A	O				
9	S	A	N	G	R	I	A		10	M	A	R	I	N	E
E	C	G	L	E	S	E	I								
11	O	L	I	V	E			12	A	U	T	H	E	N	T
U	S									S	A	L			A
13	S	H	E	R	P	A	S		15	M	O	V	A	B	L
	L	E	O							O	E	E			
17	C	R	Y	P	T	I	C		18	R	E	S	I	G	N
R		R		R		P							I		A
20	O	S	T	E	O	P	A	T	H		22	B	O	N	E
S	E	L	C							O	W	N			D
23	S	H	A	P	E	L	Y		24	S	E	A	S	I	D
E	M														S
25	R	E	S	U	M	E			26	E	S	C	A	R	G
															O

**ET 26 Crossword winners**

The winners of the *Bloomsbury Good Word Guide*, edited by Martin H. Manser (2nd edition, 1990), the prize for our April 1991 crossword, are:

- Marjorie Dawson, Walthamstow, London, England
- K.R. Groom, Oakleigh South, Victoria, Australia
- Dr. B.C. Lamb, Imperial College, London, England
- Paul Pantellini, Boulogne, France
- Gibb Webber, Department of English, Anderson University, Anderson, Indiana, U.S.A.

**ETYMORPHS**

Answers: 1c, 2d, 3a, 4b, 5a, 6d, 7b